THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) During the current financial year upto January 1997, the Indian rupee depreciated, on an average, by about 0.41 per cent per month against the US Dollar and by about 1.22 per cent against the pound Sterling. On the other hand, the rupee appreciated against the Japanese Yen, the Deutsche Mark and the Franch Franc by about 0.66 per cent, 0.37 per cent and 0.26 per cent per month, respectively during the same period.

(b) The exchange rate of the rupee is market determined. The foreign exchange market is monitored closely by the RBI and steps are taken, as and when necessary, to counter speculative pressures against the rupee and to maintain orderly foreign exchange market condition. The Foreign exchange market has behaved in an orderly fashion in 1996-97 so far.

Letters Received From M.Ps

12. SHRI RAMSAGAR. Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to refer to the reply given to Unstarred Question No. 507 dated November 22, 1996 regarding "replies to letters of Members of Parliament" and state:

(a) whether the information asked for has since been collected;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of further letters received from Members of Parliament on the affairs of banks from November 22, 1996 till date; and

(d) how many out of them are pending for replies?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b). Yes Sir. As per available information the number of letters received from Hon'ble Members of Parliament during the period from January 1,1996 to November 22, 1996 ar as follows:

	No. of letters received	No. of letters disposed off	No. of letters pending
Government of India	1728	1237	491
Reserve Bank of India	39	32	7

(c) and (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Import of Raw Rubber

13. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the MInister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated domestic production and demand of raw rubber in the country during 1997;

(b) whether there is any proposal to import raw rubber during 1997; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH). (a) The estimated domestic production and demand of raw rubber in the country during 1997-98 are 5,85,000 MTs and 6,19,000 MTs respectively.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Frauds in Banks

14. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of instances that have come to the notice of the Government where the officers in the private and public sector banks have cleared/ passed the cheques containing bogus signatures and also have issued the cheque books on forged/ fake documents and have contravened the laid down banking norms during the last six months; and

(b) the action taken against the officers involved in such transactions bank-wise ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have reported that the present system of data collection in RBI does not generate information in the manner asked for in the Question. However, RBI recently collected information from Vysya Bank Ltd. regarding cheques with bogus signatures cleared/passed for payment and cheque books issued on forget/fake documents at their Delhi branches. It was reported that during the period from 1.6.1994 to 16.1.1996, five cheque books were issued on the basis of xeroxed copy/fake requisition slips. 23 cheques with bogus signatures were passed for payment/transfer during the period from 2.6.1994 to 14.6.1996. Three officers were awarded punishment of withholding one increment. Show cause notices have been issued by the bank to other concerned officials.

Financial Institutions

15. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are awere of the problems being faced by the financial institutions in the country;

(b) whether the financial institutions have requested the Government to allow them to collect deposits like the